

# Merit Based Human Resource Management Practices: Case of Tigray National Regional State

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## Abstract

Successful merit based human resource management is a corner stone to build government institutions during the implementation of public policies and strategies, which in turn has an impact on the development performance of the country. In the course of the study we explored and assessed the factors that affect the implementation of merit based HRM in relation to recruitment, selection and promotion. Descriptive and exploratory research types were applied and the relevant data were collected from both primary and secondary sources by using key informant interviews, questionnaire and document analysis. The analysis and finding of the study shows that, in professionalizing the civil service, the city administration was not successful, there was a merit distortion and lack of neutrality to attract qualified, experienced, competent and effective civil servant and the recruitment and selection committee lacks the knowledge and experience in the recruitment, selection and promotion procedures. Besides, there was lack of exam security and nepotism as well as officials and human resource manager's involvement in merit based recruitment and selection which are the manifestations of corrupt practice and unnecessary political interference. Therefore, the recommendation forwarded is that, governments should have to take a remedial action to avoid the distortion of merit principles and it must ensure the creation of a neutral policy implementer civil service, the application of merit based recruitment, selection and promotion should be free from unnecessary political interference and it must be supported by legal framework and documentation, and the civil servant selected for promotion should be of the most meritorious one who is able and ready to perform duties at a higher rank based on his/her job performance.

## 1. Introduction

Putting the problem statement and the general objective at the center, this chapter holds back ground of the study, specific objectives, research questions, significance and scope of the study, description of the study area, definition of key terms, organization of the thesis and limitation of the study. Merit based human resource management (HRM) is a crucial end over in any organization that it is either part of the problem or part of the solution. Therefore, organizations are expected to properly manage their human resources to get maximum contribution of their employees to achieve their organizational objectives (Stone, 1998). To this regard, the human resource management reform is one of the reform components under the civil service reform program in Ethiopia and it is implemented in the civil service institutions so as to manage the civil servants in a fair, open, effective and efficient manner.

The civil service arrangements have emerged as important mediating institutions which interface between the state and its citizens. Traditionally civil service organizations were massive, highly centralized, influential structures with immense power over the governance of the affairs of a country, and often not very responsive to the changing needs of governance and public administration. However, nowadays many governments in the world have realized the importance of greater efficiency in the delivery of services to their citizens. Thus, governments have initiated large-scale reform in their civil services to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and responsiveness (Ketti, In graham, Sanders and Horner, 1996).

Any organization whether it is public, private or non government operates with and through people. Public institutions in particular are evaluated on the basis of the performance of their human resources since their establishment is purely to serve the public. Government activities highly involve human resource to implement government policies and strategies as well as to provide quality service delivery to the extent customers can be satisfied. The historical development of human resource management at International and National level indicates that, as the merit based HRM is the heart of effective implementation of government policies and strategies. Human resource management is the designing of formal systems in an organization to ensure effective and efficient use of human talent to accomplish organizational goals and it is a planned approach to establish motivated and developed staffs which can and will give their best support to achieve organizational missions (Nieto, 1989).

Merit based human resource management is signal to the absence of political favoritism and extraneous influences, and is designed to make the civil service attractive to talent individuals. However, in multi-ethnic societal countries like Ethiopia, merit system is highly distorted by several factors such as patronage against merit, the comparative importance of racial, religious based, provincial and gender based preferences. Besides, the effectiveness and efficiency of the merit based human resource management is violated by distortion in the merit system through unnecessary interference, Nepotism, friendship and the like. Even where countries that have adopted a merit based system, different practices affect in favors of these biases (Satish, 2004).

Historically, the origin of the ‘Modern’ civil service in Ethiopia dates back to the Menelik II Era 1907 when the Emperor initiated the formation of few ministries aimed at ensuring orderly and efficient arrangements to the workings of government. Since the

‘modern’ civil service was started, Ethiopia has had formal rules and procedures in accordance with the principle of developing a merit based civil service system. Though, progresses had been achieved during the Imperial Era, lack of participation in the preparation of position classification, salary scale and job descriptions, the absence of firm loyalty to the civil service rules and regulations and political interference in personnel matters were seen as chronic problems of the time to implement the CSR (Paulos, 2007 cited in Tegene, 2008).

During the post Imperial Era (Derg regime), the Ethiopian civil service has been characterized by duplication and fragmentation of public functions, downplaying of merit and professionalism, corrupt practice and inefficient service delivery. As a result the civil service was forced to serve the order of the day (Mehret, 1997). Though, historically the initiative to reform human resource in Ethiopia dates back to the Menelik II Era, it was few years after the downfall of the military government that the current Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government conducted a continuous reform to restructure the civil service system with the intention of multi-party democracy and market driven economy. Therefore, the main role of the civil service is changed and civil servants begun to serve based on an autonomous institution in merit based system (Ministry of Capacity Building, 2004). The main concern of restructuring the civil service was therefore to deal with weakness and inefficiency and to function more effectively in the dynamic environment.

### 1.1. Problem Statement

The civil service performance depends on sound recruitment, selection and promotion practices. However, low morale, high turnover, extreme civil service salary bills, and the poor service quality are widespread in the government administrations that fail to pull, maintain and motivate high-quality civil servants. The merit based system fulfils the requirement of transparency when the criteria used for recruitment, selection and promotion are made known to the public and are open to inspection. The condition of unjust is established whenever mechanisms exist that permit perceived violations of merit based hiring or promotion decisions to be reviewed and challenged (Nieto, 1989).

To this regard, the Ethiopian civil service system is highly restricted to the Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515/2007 which allows the autonomous civil service institutions guided by merit principles. However, according to Aliyou (2005) and Tegene (2008) in their empirical study on human resource management in Amhara and

South Nation Nationality and People’s Regional State respectively indicated that, the

HRM is influenced by poor capacity building, lack of participation, inadequate transparency, unaccountability and inefficient motivation system. Result oriented performance management and rewarding systems were not as expected due to lack of performance appraisal. Besides, selection and promotion were often distorted by friendship and political interference.

Merit-based recruitment and promotion involves the specification of objective criteria related to credentials, work experience and the ability to achieve organizational goals as the basis for decisions concerning entry into or advancement within the civil service. Merit-based system strives to ensure the recruitment and selection of the “best” and most competent candidates, thus assisting efforts to attract, secure and maintain professional, high-quality civil servants (UNDP, 2003). However, the current design and implementation of recruitment, selection and promotion in the study area was faced by different problems during the recruitment, selection and promotion process. *But why these problems takes place needs further research.* Therefore, it is reasonable to assess the effectiveness of merit based human resource management in line with the objectives set so far. Hence, the aim of this study is to assess Merit Based HRM in relation to recruitment, selection and promotion in Tigray Regional State: The Case of Shire City so as to recommend effective implementation strategies.

### 1.2. Research objectives

#### General objective

The general objective of this study was to assess the implementation of merit based human resource management in relation to recruitment, selection and promotion in the civil service institutions of the study area.

#### Specific objectives

Based on the general objectives of the study, the research would have the following specific objectives

- ✓ To determine whether recruitment, selection and promotion criteria are used based on merit principle in the civil service institutions or not
- ✓ To assess the practical challenges that the civil service face in implementing the merit based human resource management
- ✓ To examine how accountability is ensured in the civil service institutions when there exist distortion in the

- ✓ merit system
- ✓ To recommend practical implementation strategies to fill the gaps related to merit based recruitment, selection and promotion and to give clue for other researcher on this issue

### 1.3. Research Questions

- ✓ To what extent the recruitment, selection and promotion criteria are used based on merit principle in the civil service institutions of Shire city?
- ✓ What practical challenges does the civil service face in implementing the merit based HRM of the study area?
- ✓ How accountability is ensured in the civil service institutions when distortion in merit system exists in Shire city?
- ✓ What implementation strategies will be appropriate in filling the gaps in recruitment, selection and promotion principle?

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1. Introduction

The overall intention of this chapter is to review some related literatures of the study. Hence, the chapter contains the concepts and definition of HRM, the practices of Merit based HRM, the functions of HRM related to recruitment, selection and promotion as well as professional ethics and accountability to establish merit based HRM and accountable civil servant, the historical development of civil service in Ethiopia, merit based HRM in Ethiopian civil service and the HRM functions related with recruitment, selection and promotion in Ethiopian civil service.

### 2.2. Human Resource Management

Regarding the Human resource management definition, many scholars defined it in different ways. To illustrate some of the concepts what HRM means, it is timely to take these working definitions. Therefore, as Nieto (1989) stated, HRM is a system of activities and strategies that focus on successfully managing employees at all levels of an organization to achieve organizational goal. Employees are the human resource of an organization and its most precious asset. To be effective, an organization must make employee efficiency as a major goal. Similarly, as asserted by UNDP (2003), HRM is defined as a planned approach to managing people effectively for better achievement. It aims to set up a more open, flexible and considerable management style so that public servants will be motivated, advanced and managed in a way that they can and will give of their best to support departments' missions.

### 2.3. The Practice of Merit Based Human Resource Management

The HRM had a long history and for more than a century now, HRM, as a discipline and practice in the management of people in an organization, has evolved and developed into different areas. These disciplines and practices have gone through a process of trial and error, theory building and testing of various concepts by practicing managers and academics. The underlying forces behind the evolution and development of HRM have been and still are different accordingly, and the pursuit for knowledge of better ways of acquiring and utilizing labor. The changing organizational environment in the marketplace pushed managers to improve efficiency in the production and service delivery processes by increasing their ability to use the best practices of people management at the time. That is, employee management techniques or methods that would improve production, reduce the expense of service delivery, and at the same time ensure sustained availability of competent staff in the organization (Itika, 2011).

Similarly, HRM as a practice happens wherever there is more than one person. It starts at the family level where family members take different roles and responsibilities for the accomplishment of family objectives. The head of the household would harness all available resources including people to find the best in them in order to achieve whatever may be needed or desired. Indeed, the division of labor depends on the viewpoints, values and expectations of relatives and which are rooted in the wider society, be it a clan, a tribe or religion. Managing people in an organizational setting is well documented throughout the history of mankind. Organizational structures evolved, leadership emerged or was formed, roles and responsibilities were assigned to people, accountability systems were laid down, and rewards and punishments were also provided. In this regard, division of labor, specialization and accountability were systematically organized to achieve a specific purpose (Taylor, 1960 and Cuming, 1985 cited in Itika, 2011). However, as Armstrong (2001) stated, the documentation of the evolution and development of HRM practices can be traced back to the booming European economy of the 1900s. This economy created the necessary environment for more serious thought on the role of effective people management in the emerging labor market of the time.

Merit based system is the cornerstone to implement HRM effectively and efficiently. The historical development of public administration shows that, the merit based HRM was instituted after the enactment of

Pendleton Act 1883. Though merit system had a long history, it was/is highly affected by centralization and patron system which intern resulted delay and rigidity in HRM bureaucracy. To avoid the inflexibility and delays common to many centralized civil service personnel systems, some governments decentralize various HRM responsibilities to individual ministries and local governments. To facilitate this procedure, rules and regulations, reporting and managerial relationships are developed to mediate the relationship between agencies and central government. Government sectors or Executive Agencies which assume greater autonomy for HRM functions are typically expected to meet explicit performance targets (MdG, 2011).

However, it is difficult to strike an appropriate balance between consistency in HRM practices across government agencies and the need to provide greater flexibility to government agencies. It is imperative to recall that traditional, centralized recruitment and hiring practices were designed to limit corruption and patronage and to cultivate an esprit de-corps among civil servants. On the other hand, the tight regulations and procedures used to meet these objectives sometimes result in long dalliance, inflexibility, and failure to meet operational needs of the employing departments or the career needs of individual candidates and employees. These shortcomings, in turn, can lead to inefficiencies and poor service delivery. At the other extreme, complete decentralization of HRM functions can inhibit cross departmental movement of personnel, result in inconsistency of standards and employment terms, and potentially authorize the continuation of biased hiring or promotion activities (Satish, 2004).

### **2.3.1. Merit Based Recruitment and Selection**

As the objectives of an organization is how to attract competent employee, recruitment and selection form must be part of the process of attracting and obtaining suitable employees for the organization. This is a crucial stage in staffing function because it determines the quality of human resources that the organization will have. It is usually a long process that starts with advertising for vacant posts, receiving applications, short listing the most qualified applicants, and selecting the best candidates by using various selection techniques (Nieto, 1989).

A clear policy on when and how recruitment and selection will be conducted is important for the management, staff and the applicants because of the potential dangers of subjectivity. Much can be achieved through clear policy statements on each aspect of recruitment and selection process. Some of the gains are well described by Bratton (2007), who says that recruitment and selection policy helps the organization to: Provide guidance on how and when jobs will be advertised, Provide guidance on how selection will be conducted, State priorities for consideration, Instruct on how disputes are to be handled and Indicate the effect on other policies in the organization.

These benefits are likely to be achieved if specific principles are used in stating recruitment and selection policy. These are: Defining the key concepts in the policy, Stating the rationale for the policy, Adhering to the principal legislations of the country, Focusing on appointment based on merit, Adhering to fairness on recruitment and selection (equal opportunity), Considering cost effectiveness in the recruitment and selection process, Attracting and selecting the most valuable employees, and Taking into account the role of the management, the human resource department, selection panel, and the job applicants in the recruitment and selection process (Itika, 2011).

The principles for effective recruitment policy could be numerous depending on the nature and size of the organization. For example, the Mzumbe University policy on recruitment and selection (2008) embraces the philosophy of diverse human resources in higher learning institutions. The teaching staff need be highly trained and should be able to perform the core business of the University, which is training, research, publications and extension services. Therefore, the criteria for recruitment and selection are different from the non-academic staff (Itika, 2011).

Recruitment is the process of attracting job candidates in accordance with a human resource plan. For effective recruitment and selection, there should be a sound policy that clearly specifies the responsibilities and over all organizational human resource requirements and gaps. Ensuring that the right people in the right place at the right time is a critical factor in gaining and maintaining competitive advantage. Recruitment and selection have always been crucial processes for organizations. They are integrated activities. Hence, emphasis may be placed on admitting only those applicants who are likely to perform, obtain skills and show attitudinal commitment in line with the requirements of the organization's strategy. Effective recruitment relies on the degree to which overall management philosophy supports and strengthens an approach to HRM that focuses on the deployment and development of new employees once they have gained entry to an organization. In doing this, there needs to be an intelligent uses of recruitment channel. An organization has two sources of labor supply-the internal and the external labor market (MDG, 2011).

Internal recruitment involves words-of-mouth, recommendation or notice board announcements. In contrast, recruitment in the outdoor labor market involves different ways: advertising, job centers, employment agencies, walk-in and professional associations (Olowu, 2001). Merit-based recruitment and selection is widely acknowledged as the hallmark of well performing public administration systems. They further asserted that the African experience of applying merit in the public service has also underlined the significance of balancing merit



with other considerations aimed at ensuring some degree of representativeness like race, ethnicity and gender to ensure equal employment opportunity. Merit involves dealing with people based on their knowledge, skills and other capabilities rather than irrelevant characteristics.

Selecting the best candidate is crucial, since although appropriate systems may be in place, the wrong people may still be employed. There should be sound reasons for choosing a particular person for the task, and not just randomly filling a vacancy and valid and appropriate selection processes must be followed. HRM should recognize all the desired skills and search for the best candidate, even though it may be ultimately impossible to find the ideal person who is both able and willing to be employed easily (UNDP, 2003).

According to Adebabay (2011), in his empirical study on promoting professionalism in the public service, the main indicator of the Ethiopian civil service inefficiency is poor service delivery resulting from mismanaged civil servants. The Capacity Building strategy of the nation has been giving greater emphasis for HRM. Though HRM reform sub program is one of the components of the wider civil service reform program in Ethiopia, its implementation is weak and the following can be cited as major reasons for the weakness of the HRM sub program implementation:

*Lack of comprehensive and integrated knowledge and skill on HRM, lack of visualizing the contribution of HRM in attaining organizational goals, inability of creating modern structural framework for HRM in all line institutions, lack of understanding to use HRM as a change model to achieve organizational transformation, devolving HRM authorities to line institutions without adequate support to civil service professionals and line managers, inadequate enforcement and accountability mechanisms, and lack of getting line managers ownership for HRM among others.*

Similarly, Human resource development in the Ethiopian public services has not been given as much attention as it should. The restructuring of public services, rewriting of procedures, redesigning of business processes and technology adoption have been taken as if they were the sole change factors and drivers of sustainable improvement. It is paradoxical that many civil service offices have relapsed into their prior position, despite huge investments in business process reengineering (BPR), which has only resulted in minor and short-lived changes. The massive redeployment of manpower, during the BPR implementation, mainly focused on the political intimacy of employees, rather than on the competencies required to perform jobs. Recruitment and retention of a critical mass of experienced employees has been overlooked, and many were victims of the hideous process of BPR implementation (Belay, 2013).

### **2.3.2. Merit Based Promotion**

Merit based promotion is the process advancement of an employee from one job position to another job position that has higher salary variety, higher level job position and responsibilities. Sometimes promotion results in an employee taking on responsibility for managing or overseeing the work of additional employees. The decision making power tends to rise with a promotion as well. Visually, a promotion moves an employee's job up one level on an organizational chart. Promotion is viewed as advantageous to employees because promotion has an impact on pay, authority, responsibility, and the ability to influence broader organizational decision making. Promotion raises the status of the employee who receives a promotion which is a visible sign of esteem from the employer (Sarah, 2010).

Merit based Promotion in the civil service is a form of recognition for employees who make significant and effective work contributions. As a result, dilemma arises in organizations since repeated promotions generally place an employee in a management role. Employers are also challenged to provide alternative career paths for employees who ought to have the benefits and recognition provided by promotion, but not the aspiration to manage the work of other employees. Individual contributors must be qualified for promotions that recognize and reward their role as contributors. Promotion can be a powerful communication tool about what is valued within an organization. Thus, a promotion should be available to employees who act in the contribution of work value (Sarah, 2010).

Regarding to promotion of an employee, one can ask why promotion is an agenda and how should be promoted? But the quake answer is, because it is a powerful communication tool about what is valued within an organization and for the reason that employees if promoted can handle the process products and problems, easily as they are already connected to organization but new incumbent may take some to adjust himself/herself, the cost of training the insiders for the higher position is nearly nil hence no extra training cost, employees will give their best as they know that reward of giving good performance is sure and high morale of the employees is achieved (Bratton, 2007). Promotion is a motivating tool that assists individuals and organizations to improve the skills and abilities for effective performance. Employees take promotion as a reward and recognition to assume higher positions and responsibilities. If promotion does not give employees higher responsibility, commensurate authority and pay, it is invalid. Promotion also should be based on the organization interest and it should be transparent, objective, and serve the purpose of development (Getachew, 2006). However, in some countries like Ethiopia, in the civil service promotion is given to those who are politically conscious and loyal to the party.

## 2.4. Professional Ethics and Accountability

Professional ethics is defined as an ambition to conduct and focusing on the prevention of illegal or immoral behavior. The intension of merit based human resource management is to create a professional and ethical civil servant that can act in the public interest (Banks, 2004). Thus it includes neutrality, loyalty, transparency, punctuality, effectiveness, fairness, and other values that may be specific to the public services of individual countries. It is a broad norm that delineates how public servants act as agents of the state and as members of an established profession in carrying out their official duties (Buba, 2009). A civil service dedicated to professionalism and ethics is more likely to attain its goals if it has in place an ethical infrastructure. To promote professionalism, a career system based on the merit principle that can do reasonably and neutral recruitment and promotion of civil servants must be in place. This structure should be accompanied by a clear civil service law that outlines the legal rights and responsibilities of civil servant (Martin and Thompson, 2006).

The central theme of merit based HRM is to establish an accountable and dedicated public servant. The ideal approach of accountability however is a broad concept of responsibility. Accountability is the obligation to respond for the completion of assigned and accepted duties within the framework of the authority and resources provided. A special importance is given on accountability in the context of responsible government in general and civil service in particular. Professional Ethics and accountability are inescapable parts of everyday practice for everyone at any level of civil service hierarchy (United Nation, 2000).

## 2.5. The Historical Development of Civil Service in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the last four decades had been characterized by the development of formal rules and procedures in accordance with the meritocratic principle. However, serious failures in implementation marked during previous regimes (Paulos, 2007). The Civil Service is the operational arm of government charged with the implementation and administration of public policy. According to Getachew and Richard (2007), the origin of the *modern* civil service in Ethiopia dates back to the Menelik II Era when the Emperor initiated the formation of a few ministries to instituted efficient arrangement to the workings of government.

It was during Emperor Haile Selassie that undertook a series institutionalization and restructuring measures focused towards bringing an effective and efficient civil service governed by homogeneous rules and procedures. The civil service was restructured with functional changes during this reign especially after issuance of the Public Services Order No.23/1961, which was later amended by Legal Notice No 20/1962 and created the Central Personnel Agency (CPA). It was part of the Federal Government Administration that is accountable for rules and regulations, related to civil servants recruitment, selection and promotion, position classification and salary increment and exclusive right to issue regulations after approved by the council of ministers (Alemayehu, 2001). However, the period was known by lack of preparation on position classification, pay scale, job descriptions, and lack of trained personnel to prepare the same and inclusive policy. Furthermore, the absence of firm loyalty to the civil service rules and regulations and political interference in personnel matters were seen as chronic problems of the time (Paulos, 2001).

Taking in to account these limitations, the government embarked on a comprehensive CSR Program in 1996. Devolution of powers from the federal government to the regional governments, reorganization and restructuring ministries and agencies, manpower rationalization and salary enhancement efforts were intensified by launching a national capacity-building program (Alemayehu, 2001). According to the Government of Ethiopia (2001), it was also recognized the Task Force team objectively to assess problems in the civil service. The Task Force comes up with the direction; attitude and work practices of the bureaucratic machinery were ill suited to the needs of the new policy environment of the nation. Some of the problems included: attitudinal harms, lack of clear national service delivery policy; insufficient recognition of citizens' rights; lack of accountability; excessively hierarchical organizations; giving priority to the convenience of providers, not customers; more concern on in-put and habitual activities, less on achieving tangible outputs; lack of consultation with customers, and lack of capacity.

This reform program was designed in five major sub-programs: expenditure control and management sub reform, HRM sub reform, service delivery sub reform, top management system sub reform and ethics reform sub-programs. During the implementation of this reform program, though some progress, there was lack of capacity, ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the civil service. The government also launched the Public Sector Capacity Building Program /PSCAP/. Following the launch of this program, in 2003, the government initiated the reform agenda in the form of five-year Public Service Delivery Capacity Building program aiming to strengthen public service, improve managerial effectiveness and developed the human resource in public, private, civil society and higher education institutions (Tilaye, 2007).

### 2.5.1. Merit Based Human Resource Management in Ethiopian civil service

The civil service reform in Ethiopia is a reform which intentionally the government has undertaken to transform the civil service institutions from a bureaucratic, inefficient and ineffective to build fair and flexible, efficient and effective, transparent and accountable institutions. It was to this regard that the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase (1996-2002) civil

service reform introduced with 5 sub reform programs among which the HRM sub reform program is one of them. As has been mentioned above, though the human resource is the mail-stone to implement government policies, the Ethiopia civil service had encountered several institutional challenges in relation with the changes of different regime types. However, the current Ethiopian government has given due attention to the merit based HRM. To this end, the Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation (*Proclamation No. 515/2007*) states that:

*The civil servant refers to a person employed permanently by federal government institutions; however, it does not include government officials with the rank of minister, director general and their equivalent and above; members of the House of Peoples' Representatives and the House of the Federation; federal judges and prosecutors; members of the Armed Forces and the Federal Police including other employees governed by the regulations of the Armed forces and employees excluded from the coverage of this Proclamation by other appropriate laws.*

The government by clearly defining who the civil servants are and who are not, the government also sets the guiding principles of merit based human resource management. To this regard, the proclamation states clearly how to recruit, select and promote. Therefore, these things are discussed as follow based on the Articles placed on Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation.

#### **2.5.1.1. Recruitment and Selection in Ethiopian civil service**

Merit based recruitment and selection is the central issue of any organizational HRM. The Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation (*Proclamation No. 515/2007*): Article 12 sub Article 1 indicates that human resource planning is vital to enable government institutions to take measure to meet the objective specified in the strategic plans, to predict the demand on human resource, to obtain the right number and type of human resource, to build-up and properly utilize it, monitor and appraise its result and make corrective measures from time to time. Go down to this Article sub Article 2 clearly states any government institution based on its strategic plan shall prepare and implement short term, medium term and long term human resource plan.

It is with this intention that the government of Ethiopia set under Article 12 sub Article3 vacancies may be filled through merit based recruitment, promotion, transfer or employing on the basis of the human resource plan. With this assumption, Article 13 sub Article 1 of the Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation (*Proclamation No. 515/2007*) positioned in filling of vacancies, there shall be equal treatment among job seekers or civil servants in filling vacancies because of their ethnicity, sex, religion, political viewpoint, disability, HIV/AIDS or any other ground. Under this Article sub Article 2 there is also a brief that a vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets the qualification required for the position and scores higher than other candidates. Notwithstanding these sub Articles, the 3<sup>rd</sup> sub Article illustrates that, in recruitment, promotion and deployment preference shall be given to: feminine candidates, candidates with disabilities, and members of nationalities comparatively less represented in the public office, having equal or close scores to the other candidates.

Similarly, to ensure the merit based recruitment and selection the government asserted how vacancy announcement and examination for Recruitment will be conducted. Article16 sub Article 1 of this proclamation indicates that government institutions shall advertise every vacant position to be filled by a new civil servant. Despite of this Article, whenever there is shortage of professionals in the labor market, a government institution may solicit graduates of higher educational institutions for recruitment in cooperation with the institutions.

As has been stated, in Ethiopia civil servants are government employees that are governed by the Federal Civil servants Proclamation (*Proclamation number 515/2007*) and many of the merit principles in Ethiopia are adapted from the American civil service merit principles. The American civil service merit principles are the following:

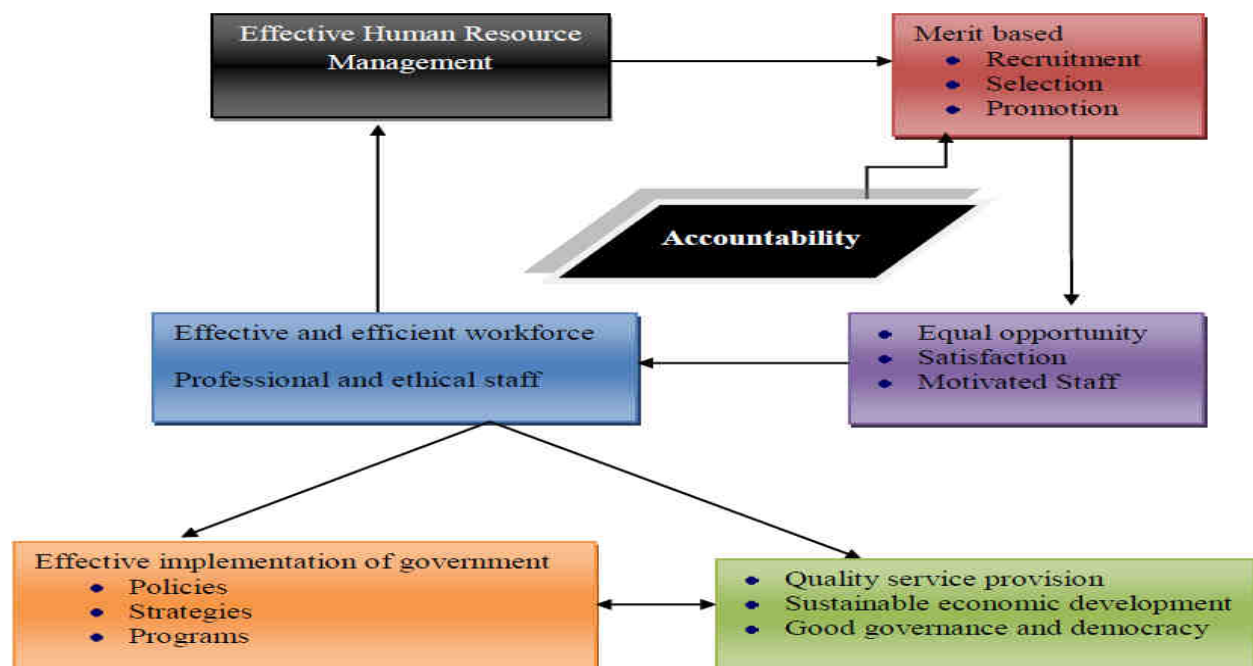
- To recruit, select, and advance on merit after fair and open competition
- Care for employees and applicants fairly and equitably
- Providing equal pay for equal work and reward excellent performance
- Maintaining high standards of honesty behavior, and worry for the public interest
- Administer employees efficiently and effectively
- Retaining or separate employees on the basis of their performances
- Be educate and train employees if it results in better organizational or individual performance
- Commitment to protect employees from improper political influence and
- Make sure to protect employees against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information in “whistleblower” situations (Adebabay, 2011).

#### **2.5.1.2. Promotion in Ethiopian civil service**

Regardless of its practice, in Ethiopia there is a clear determination of how to promote, who should be promoted and the like. In the Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515/2007 there is also clear definition that promotion shall be given for the purpose of enhancing the performance of government institutions and to motivate the employees. Besides, Article 24 sub Article1 states that any civil servant, who has completed his audition, may compete for promotion unless he is banned by relevant directives on promotion. In doing this,

since promotion is not free of human bias, Article 25 passes a promotion obtained on the basis of fraudulent evidence or granted in contravention of the law shall, without prejudice to disciplinary and illegal liability, be revoked any time.

**Figure 2.6 Conceptual framework to analyze merit based HRM**



**Source: own Survey (2013)**

The conceptual framework shown in figure 2.4 above is formulated based on the concepts of merit based HRM stated under chapter two. The central issue of the conceptual framework is the dynamics of merit based HRM to achieve the output/outcome of the merit system. The success/failure of merit based HRM is highly dependent on merit based Recruitment, Selection and Promotion when supported by accountability. Effective and efficient workforce as well as professional and ethical staff is expected from merit based HRM if one is accountable for what he/she did. Because merit based HRM allows equal opportunity, satisfaction and motivated staff in the civil service institutions.

The HRM is also symbolic unless the independent variables shown in framework are clearly addressed and supported by setting appropriate standards and objectives to be guided. The expected output of the merit based HRM is effective implementation of government policies, strategies and programs in doing so to bring the outcomes: quality service provision, sustainable economic development and ensuring good governance and democracy.

The HRM variables indicated in the conceptual framework cannot be realized without the proper usage of merit principles. In all the civil service institutions, there is always HRM plan to recruit, select and promote so as to fill vacant jobs and civil servants advancement. Hence, as asserted in the conceptual framework, the dynamic process of recruitment, selection and promotion must be on merit system and by ensuring who is accountable for what.

As has been mentioned in the background and problem statement of this study, some of the challenges of merit based HRM in Ethiopia are stated by different authors and government reports. However, to investigate the way how merit based HRM is implemented and what practical challenges it faces in Shire city of Tigray region is reasonable and timely so as to recommend suitable implementation strategies.

### 3. Research design and methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

Research methodology is a systematic way of solving the research problem and a research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted, it is a blue print and an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the questions to its operational implication and the final analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). Therefore, during the study, the researcher has applied both descriptive and exploratory research design. This helped the researcher to describe the merit based recruitment, selection and promotion and to investigate the



inter-linked approaches of these variables in the merit based human resource management functions of the study area.

### 3.2. Sources of Data

The researcher used both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were gathered through questionnaires and informant interview from civil servant, process owners and civil service officials. On the other hand, secondary data were also collected from books, journal articles, internet sources, academic thesis, government reports, proclamations, rules and regulation and statistical bulletin which were available in different libraries, from internets, annual reports of the city and specially the HRM reports of the city.

### 3.3. Sampling Techniques and sampling size

The sampling technique describes method of selecting the sample and the sample size itself. Therefore, the sampling procedures and its variant forms along with their rationale were used in this section. To conduct a research on this topic, the researcher employed the Rule of the Thumb because Rule of the Thumb states that, if the target population is below 1000 to take 30% as a sample size (RMT handbook, 2008).

To cover and collect data on the merit based HRM by using questionnaire and interview is too costly and takes long time. To this constraint, the researcher used the sample size that was acceptable and representative to the population under study. According to the annual report of Shire City civil service office (2011/12), the target population is 947. Therefore, in order to have an acceptable and representative sample size, the researcher applied 30% of the population based on the formula. Besides, in need of triangulation and cross check the data, civil service officials (the politically appointed and the core process owners) of the City was included purposively. Therefore, the samples were obtained from:

Sample civil servant
$947 \times 30\% = 285$

On the other hand, four sample sector offices of the City were taken by purposive sampling technique. This was because, some of these offices were with large departmental divisions and some of them were also with large number of civil servants. Therefore, to had a representative and adequate sample size, purposive sampling technique was applied. Hence, the obtained sample civil servants by the above formula (Rule of the Thumb) were distributed to sample sector offices of the City based on their proportion (*number of civil servants in a sector offices X the calculated sample size ÷ to total population*). The sample distribution of each sector offices was presented in the following table as below:

**Table 3.3.1. Sample distribution of each sector office**

Sample Bureaus	Distribution of civil servants	Sample size
Civil service office	15	5
Education office	629	221
Health office	92	32
Urban development Trade & Industry	73	27
Total	809	285

Source: Shire City civil service office Annual report (2011/12)

The obtained sample civil servants by the proportional distribution table were used by simple random sampling method to collect data through questionnaire and interview.

### 3.4. Methods of Data collection

The data collection methods for this study were drawn from the primary and secondary data types points of view. Therefore, the primary data was collected directly from, respondents both through questionnaires (civil servants) and informant interview (civil servants, politically appointed officials and core process owners) methods. Besides, the secondary data was collected from published and unpublished materials and pertinent academic thesis by using document analysis method.

**Table.3.4.1 Tools of data collection and Distribution of respondents**

No	Types of respondent	Key Informant Interview	Questionnaire
1	Office heads	4	-
2	process owners	4	-
4	Civil servants	20	265
Total		28	265

### 3.5. Methods of Data analysis

The relevant data collected by using the above methods were processed and analyzed to generate percentages, averages and sequences. The analysis which helped the researcher to look in to the implementation performance of merit based human resource management in the study area, the researcher applied excel to interpret the data by using tables, graphs and percentages. The logical arguments were discussed, analyzed, narrated and triangulated based on the pre-stated basic variables of the merit based human resource management.

## 4. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

### 4.1. Introduction

In social science research, data collection is of the tiresome task which requires tolerance of the researcher and collaboration of others to get the pertinent primary and secondary data. With this in mind, the researcher had collected the relevant data from primary and secondary sources based on the population under study and here, the data collectors were played an important role to collect primary data through questionnaire. The researcher was framed to collect data through questionnaire from 265 respondents. However, 7 and 4 of questionnaires were incomplete and unreturned respectively. Therefore, to conduct a meaningful analysis, the discussion was done by subtracting the incomplete and unreturned instruments from the total. Hence, the analysis was done on 254 civil servant respondents.

The merit based HRM in Ethiopia in general and that of Tigray's regional state in particular is a sole promoter of gender equality in the civil service institutions during recruitment, selection and promotion. Besides, the Tigray's revised Civil Servants Proclamation No. 189/2010 Article 16 Sub Article 2 gives a special support to females, minority groups and to the disabled persons. Therefore, the expectation was civil service organizations to have a relatively equal distribution of male and female civil servants. Civil servants were asked to describe their sex and their response is summarized in the figure bellow and the result discussed as follow.

The gender distribution of respondents in the sample sector offices of the study area was 55.1% and 44.9% for male and female respectively. This indicates that except in some sector offices like the civil service office (75% male and 25% female) and urban development (63.6% male and 36.4% female) the distribution of male and female civil servants by sex was impressive and fair.

The Federal civil servants proclamation No. 515/2007 in general and the revised Tigray's Civil Servants Proclamation No. 189/2010 in particular declares that, any Ethiopian citizen above the age of 18 have the right to be employed as a permanent government employee. Nowadays, the Ethiopian government has given due attention to have effective, efficient, competent and ethical professionals in the civil service institutions. With this scenario, the productive or the middle age groups are expected as change agents of the national development by providing quality service and promoting good governance and democracy. For that reason, the age distribution of sample respondents is reviewed in figure bellow and the answer discussed as follow.

According to the table 4.1 bellow, the majority of civil servants in Education and civil service sector offices of the study area were ranging from the age 33-47 as 55% of the Education office and 50% of the Civil Service office civil servants were at this age group. However, most of the civil servants in Health office (50%) and Urban Development office (40.9%) were at the age ranging from 18-32. Therefore, we can generalize that the civil servants of the study area were at their productive age.

The civil service institutions all over the world are the centers of professional experts. Thus, governments both in developed and developing countries including Ethiopia are giving more priority to capacitate the human resource and the CSR in the last three decades was intentionally to restructure the civil service institutions, to build the capacity of the civil service and to provide quality service for citizens. The rationale behind educated and professional civil servant according to Hammer (1996) is that civil servants shall adhere to a certain degree of value to serve the public effectively. It shows that civil servants shall have the highest professional quality and behaviors that put the public interest first. Thus, professionalizing the civil service helps to have civil servants that are efficient and effective in their performance. In this regard, the educational background of the respondents is presented in table 4.1.

The data obtained in table 4.1 shows that, 75%, 56.5%, 45.5% and 39.3% of the civil servants in civil service, education, urban development and health sector offices were 1<sup>st</sup> degree holders respectively. Similarly, a

significant number of civil servants in health office (42.9%), 36.4% of the urban development office employees, 28.5% of the civil servants in education sector office and 25% of the civil service sector workforce were diploma. However, regarding to their educational background, 10.7% of the health sector civil servants were still below grade 12 and 13.6% of the urban development workforces were also certificate. Taking in to account the educational background of the civil servants of its office, specially, the health and urban development offices of the study area needs to give a special attention to capacitate and upgrade the skill of their workforce. The other problem observed was in relation to 2<sup>nd</sup> degree and above, it is not a new propaganda that the implementation of government policies and strategies are by large on the hands of professional civil servants. But the study area failed in professionalizing its civil servants because only 4% of the education sector office was with their 2<sup>nd</sup> degree but not in the other sample offices.

### 4.3. Merit Based Human resource Management

As a denial to centralization and politicized civil service, governments in different parts of the world have been conducting their administrative reform and particularly the CSR to decentralize and depoliticize the human resource management. The main objective of the CSR was/is to modify, repair or transform the public service institutions and there is always a merit based HRM agenda to build a professionalized, competent, effective and neutral policy implementer civil service.

The orientation of the Ethiopian CSR was therefore a top agenda of the government since 1991 and it was come on the names of Top Management sub reform, Human Resource Management sub reform, Service Delivery improvement sub reform, Government Expenditure and Control sub reform and Civil Service Ethics sub reform Program. The HRM sub reform was therefore part of the larger CSR in Ethiopia in general and in Tigray regional state in particular. One of the major objectives of the HRM sub reform was to create a legal framework both at regional and *Woreda* level. For this reason, the Tigray national regional government has established a legal framework for the civil service under its jurisdiction.

The power to recruitment, selection, promotion, assignment, grievance hearing and inspection as well as transfer within the *Woreda* and human resource development through short, medium and long term trainings are given to the civil service Bureau and the *Woreda* civil service offices under the revised Tigray civil servants proclamation No 189/2010. Many scholars agree that, the civil servants are the lifeblood of any government because the implementation of government policies and strategies are highly dependent on them. Therefore, proper management of this vital resource is essential to promote economic development and to sustain democratic governance of a nation. Hence, the merit based human resource management with particular reference to merit based recruitment, selection and promotion in the study area is discussed under this sub heading.

#### 4.3.1. Merit Based Selection

##### 4.3.1.1. Principles of Merit Based Selection

In implementing the white paper of the HRM, merit based selection is of the vital aspects of it. According to Bratton (2007), the establishment of clearly designed policy when and how to select and recruit a permanent employee is an important precondition for the human resource management, staff and the applicants because of the potential dangers of its subjectivity. To this end, the Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No 515/2007 in general and the revised Tigray's Civil Servant Proclamation No 189/2010 in particular states that, all employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspect of human resource management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights. Therefore, the following table indicates respondent's observation on merit based selection in the study area.

**Table 4.2.Merit Based selection Principles**

Items		Alternatives					
		Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Strongly	Neutral	Total
		Agree			Disagree		
Your organization uses merit based principles during selection	No	31	52	127	35	9	254
	%	12.2	20.5	50	13.8	3.5	100
Your office select applicants in an impartial way	No	29	84	111	23	7	254
	%	11.4	33.1	43.7	9.1	2.7	100

**Source: Field Survey 2013**

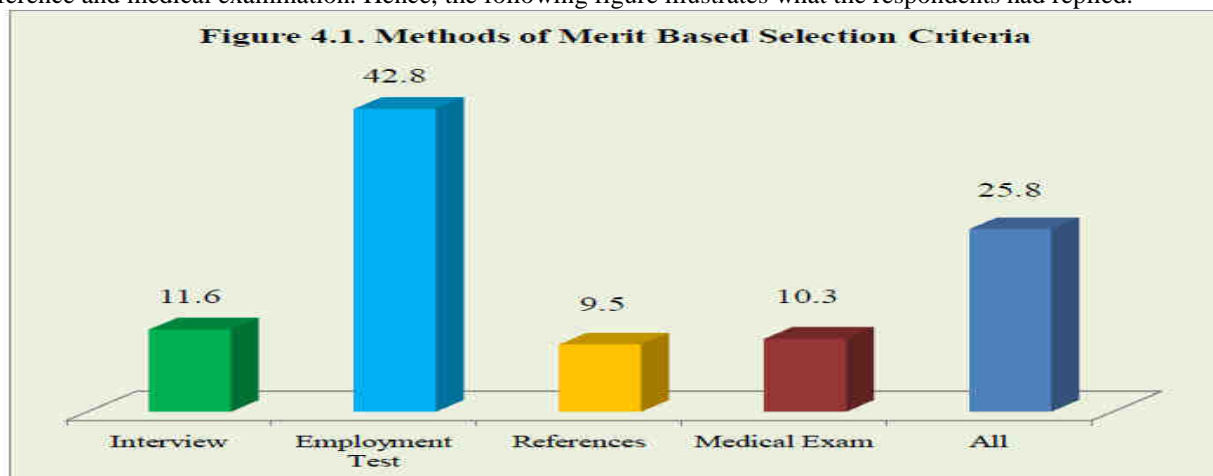
The data in table 4.2 illustrates that, respondents were asked to suggest the application of merit based selection principles in their organization. The merit based selection is a prerequisite to attract qualified, experienced, competent, effective and efficient civil servant. However, 50% of the respondents disagree and 13.8% of them strongly disagree on the principal application of the merit based selection criteria. Only 20.5% and 12.2% of the civil servants have agree and strongly agree on the proper application of merit based selection principles respectively. Besides, respondents were asked to respond about the impartiality of merit based selection procedures. All respondents believe that impartial selection is a vital aspect of recruitment and promotion. To this regard, 33.1% of the respondents agree as their organization use an impartial selection to recruit and promote and 11.4% of them strongly agree on the issue. However, 43.7% of the civil servants were claimed and responded their disagreement on the fairness of the merit based selection in their organization and 9.1% of them strongly disagree. This tells us that, in the city administration there is a merit distortion during selection because above 50% of the respondent disagree on the effectiveness of its application.

#### 4.3.1.2. Merit Based Selection Procedures

There are a predetermined selection procedures and criteria as a legal framework to administer the merit based HRM under the jurisdiction of the Tigray's Civil Servants Proclamation No 189/2010. Hence, respondents were asked to share their experience regarding the legal function of merit based selection procedures to recruit and promotion. Accordingly, 33.1% of the civil servants respond that, the merit based selection procedures were applied by their organization moderately and 24.7% of them replied the selection criteria was less and incompletely used by their institution. However, 42.2% of the civil servant agrees on the proper application of the merit based procedures. Of the mandates given to the human resource managers was to supervise the proper implementation of the selection procedures of job applicants. However, there is a potential bend of the merit based selection procedures as a significant number of the civil servants unhappy on the implementation practice.

#### 4.3.1.3. Merit Based Selection Criteria

The selection criterion consists of the skills and qualifications required to do the job. According to the Tigray recruitment and selection manual, the criteria used to screen job candidates are education, relevant or equivalent work experience, knowledge of the job, technical skills and abilities, problem-solving abilities, communication skills and supervision. Therefore, the method used to select a potential candidate is interview, employment test, reference and medical examination. Hence, the following figure illustrates what the respondents had replied.



**Source:** survey

According to figure 4.1 above, the most common method used as a merit based selection criteria in the study area was employment test. Accordingly, 42.8% of the respondents replied that their organization communicates the applicants knowledge by using employment test and 10.3% of them answered as medical examination was the best method of merit based selection from job applicants in their organization. Similarly, 11.6% of the civil servants under study reacted that interview as the method of merit based selection was a common practice. However, 9.5% of the respondents depicted that references was the method used to check the previous condition of the job applicant during merit selection. Likewise, 25.8% of the civil servants replied that all the explained methods of merit based selection criteria were used to select one of the best job candidates in their organization. Despite the fact that, there are different methods of merit based selection criteria, however, the application of all those merit based selection criteria was haphazardly used in implementation by the city administration of the study area.

#### 4.3.2. Merit Based Recruitment

##### 4.3.2.1. Principles of Merit Based Recruitment

Merit-based recruitment is described as the set of activities and processes used to legally obtain a sufficient



number of qualified people at the right place and time so that the people and the organization can select each other in their own best short and long term interests. The Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No 515/2007 states that a vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets the qualification required for the position and scores higher than other candidates. Likewise, the Tigray Civil Servants Proclamation No 189/2010 confirms that, the merit based recruitment in the civil service should be from qualified individuals and appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society based on the merit principles to attract a competent and effective professional after an open competition. With this in mind, respondents were asked about the proper implementation of the merit based recruitment principles in their organization and the following table indicates what they had respond.

**Table 4.3 Merit Based Recruitment Principles**

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neutral	Total
Your office uses merit based principles during recruitment	14.2%	28.7%	40.6%	16.5%	0	100%
Your office recruit employees based on a pre stated plan	8.7%	25.6%	53.5%	9.1%	3.1%	100%

**Source: survey**

The table 4.3 above illustrates that, though, merit based recruitment as a human resource management function is one of the activities that impact most critically on the performance of an organization, however, 40.6% of the respondents were disagree on the scientific application of the merit based recruitment principles of their organization and 16.5 % strongly disagree on the practice of the merit principles during recruitment while it is understood and accepted that poor recruitment decisions continue to affect organizational performance and limit goal achievements.

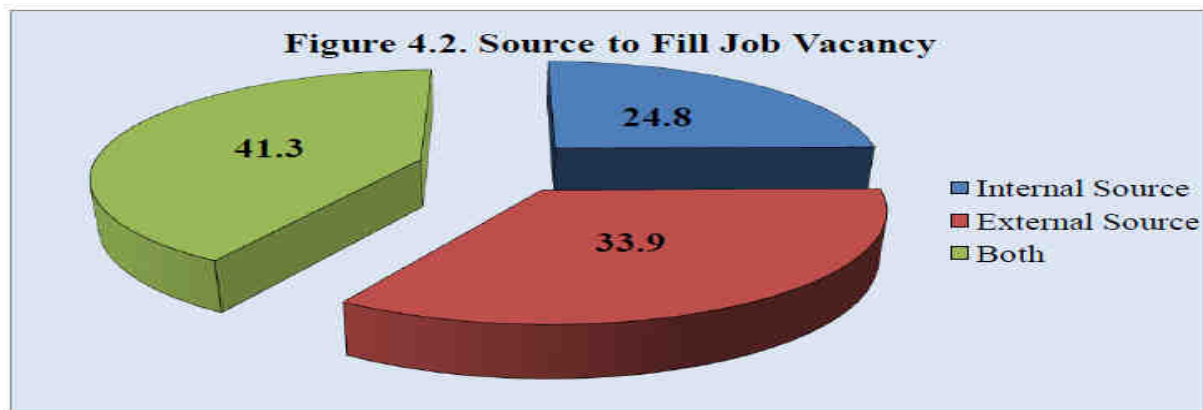
The merit principle in the civil service entails the appointment of the best person for any given job, made through recruitment or promotion based on explicit merit rules that are publicly understood and can be challenged if a breach is suspected. To this regard, 28.7% of the civil servant under study validated showing their agreement on the function of merit principles during recruitment in their institution and 14.2% of them strongly agree with the positive application of the merit principles. To this regard, interviewees were also confirmed that the proper application of merit based rules and regulations to put the right person in the right place and time, the officials and process owners distorted the civil servants proclamation with regular appointment without open competition which in turn leads to nepotism and corrupt practice.

Recruitment is the process of attracting job candidates in accordance with a human resource plan. When an organization makes the decision to fill an existing vacancy through recruitment, the first stage is conducting a comprehensive job analysis. This is conducted through the human resource planning, particularly where recruitment is a relatively frequent occurrence. Once a job analysis has been conducted, the organization can have a clear indication of the particular requirements of the job, where that job fits into the overall organization structure, and can then begin the process of recruitment to attract suitable candidates for the particular vacancy and the application of merit based principles will be must.

Accordingly, respondents were asked to replay on the planning issue of their organization and 25.6% of the civil servant under study verified their agreement as their organization recruit based on the preset human resource recruitment plan and 8.7% of them strongly agree with the ideal recruitment plan. However, 53.5% of the respondents were replayed their disagreement on the planed recruitment of their organization and 9.1% of them strongly disagree on the issue by supporting the existence of arbitrary recruitment and political appointment. This indicates that the violation of merit principles and the poorness of plan based HRM of the study area. On the other hand, interviewee respondents were answered as the problem of poor planning, political appointment, lack of clarity to apply the rules and regulations in the merit system were of the basic challenging factors that affect the implementation of merit practicing.

**4.3.2.2. Sources to Fill Job Vacancy in the Civil Service**

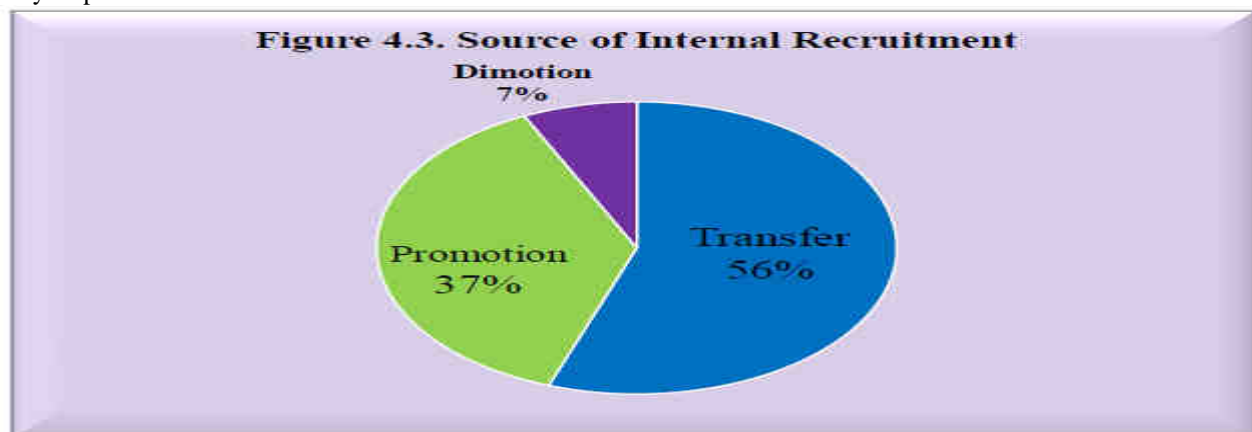
The recruitment schema of human resource management in Ethiopia is conducted either by closed merit: a vacant position advertised only for applicants from within the organization to compete for the vacant position or open merit: the vacant position is advertised widely by whatever means deemed to be suitable to attract applicants from outside the organization. The Civil Servants Proclamation No 189/2010 of Tigray national regional state allows pulling job seekers from internal, external or from both sources. Hence, respondents were consulted to share their experience about the sources to fill job vacancy in their organization. The pie chart below depicts that the sources of job vacancy in the study area.



**Source: survey**

The above figure 4.2 summarizes that, most of the civil servants under study (41.3%) were responded as their organization used both from internal and external sources, meaning closed and open merit systems to fill the job vacancy. However, 33.9% of them were replied that as their organization advertize job vacancies in an open merit to attract employees from external and 24.8% confirms the internal recruitment and promotion to fill the job vacancy in their institution. Therefore, there is a good practice of advertizing job vacancy in the city administration.

The civil servant respondents were also consulted to describe the sources of internal recruitment in their organization. Closed merit is a sole promoter of civil servants promotion and transfer. Experience shows that such condition helps to motivate and strengthen government employees within the civil service institutions. To this regard, respondents were requested to determine the sources of internal recruitment in their organization and they responded as follow.



**Source: survey**

According to figure 4.3 above, 56% of the civil service respondents were answered that, the internal source of recruitment in their institution was conducted by internal transfer and 37% of them were also responded as most of the internal recruitment was by promotion. However, 7% of the civil servants were reacted as the source of internal recruitment in their organization was done by demotion. The best practice here was giving 1<sup>st</sup> chance to own workforce in promotion and transfer to fill vacant positions within.

#### 4.3.3. Merit Based Promotion

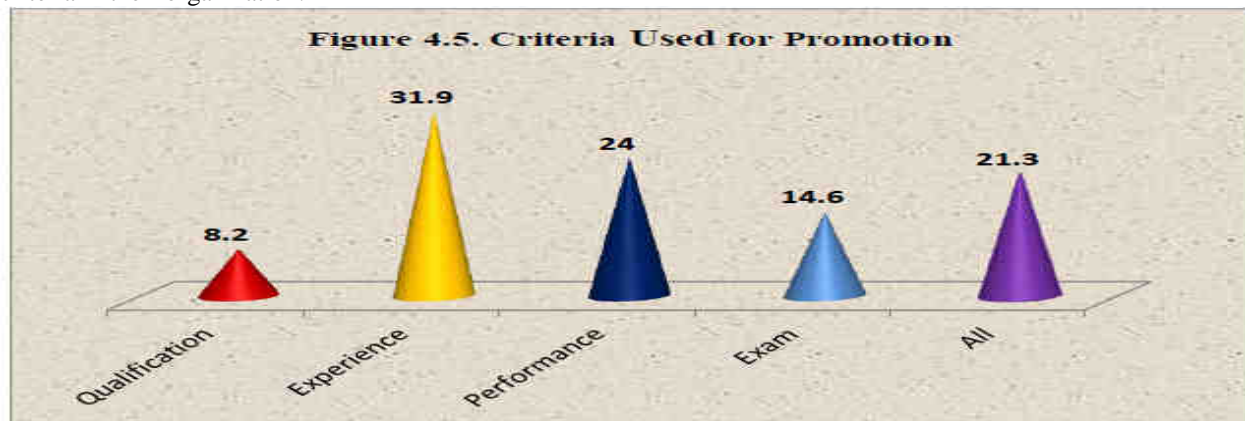
As many scholars agreed, promotion is the process of advancement of an individual civil servant from one job position to another that has higher salary variety, higher level job position and responsibilities. It is viewed as advantageous to employees because promotion has an impact on pay, authority, responsibility and the ability to influence broader organizational decision making. The Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No 515/2007 in general and the Tigray's Revised Civil Servants

Proclamation No 189/2010 in particular confirms that, promotion is the assignment of a civil servant to a higher grade and it is given for the purpose of enhancing the performance of government institutions and to motivate the employees.

Therefore, respondents were asked whether their institution used merit principles to promote the civil service workforce or not. All the civil servant under study accepts the notion that promotion is a form of recognition for employees who make significant and effective work contributions. However, 41.4% of the respondents disagree and 16.9% of them strongly disagree on the proper application of the merit based

promotion in their institutions. Some of the respondents annoyed on why you ask me about the distorted merit principles, while party loyalists enjoyed all the civil service positions. Some of them said, please leave it, it is only on the whitepaper civil servants proclamation that all merit disciplines are correctly stated. On the other hand, 30.3% of the civil servants agree and 11.4% of them strongly agree on the application of merit based principles to promote the effective and efficient civil servant.

The civil servants under study were requested to share their observation on the criteria used to promote government employee in their city administration. Promotion to be used as a motivating tool to assist individuals and organizations to improve their skills and abilities, there should be effective selection criteria to promote the high performer workforce. Employees take promotion as a reward and recognition to assume higher positions and responsibilities. The following figure illustrates what the civil servants have said about the promotion criteria in their organization.



**Source:** survey

According to the data in figure 4.5 above, to promote a civil servant in the study area, priority was given for experience than performance. Accordingly, 31.9%, 24%, 14.6% and 8.2% of the respondents were answered their organization used experience, performance, entrance exam and qualification as criteria to promote the civil servant in civil service positions. On the other hand, 21.3% of the civil servants under study were responded that as civil servants promoted if all the criteria placed in terms of qualification, experience, performance and entrance exam were fulfilled. All eligible civil servants considered on equal basis. The civil servant selected for promotion of the most meritorious one who is able and ready to perform duties at a higher rank.

#### 4.4. The Application of Job Description to Recruit, Select and promote civil servants

Merit based recruitment; selection and promotion processes are an important practice of human resource management and are crucial in affecting organizational success. The quality of new recruits depends upon an organization's recruitment practices, and that the relative effectiveness of the selection phase is inherently dependent upon the caliber of candidates attracted. These are ensured when recruitment, selection and promotion criteria are highly linked with specific job description of the vacant position. To this regard respondents were asked to explain the application of job description as a criterion to recruit, select and promote in the civil service and their response as described as follows; the civil servants under study were asked whether the current recruitment, selection and promotion procedure helps to put the right person at the right place or not. When they respond, 23.2% and 28.8% of them replied yes, it is helpful. However, 48% of the civil servants answered no. The researcher was requested the respondents to justify if their answer is no and most of them replied that, when a civil servant is upgrade his/her academic performance by changing the area of qualification: for instance if a teacher studied Management or Accounting among others, while competing to be a manager or accountant his/her work experience is taken as zero whatever experience does he/she have because of the criteria placed with the name relevant and irrelevant work experience.

Some also argued that in the selection criteria some specialization fields like urban management, public management and federalism are not included as field of employment in the human resource management guideline. For that reason, though you studied in those fields, it is very difficult to apply and compete in any vacancy which calls management as requirement. Hence, urban issues are not managed by urban managers; most public issues are not governed by public managers as well.

Similarly, respondents were asked whether they interviewed when they recruited, selected and promoted in relation to the job description required or not and 30.7% of the respondents answered yes there was an interview which directly related to the job description. 29.5% of them were also replied yes there was an interview but not related to the job description. On the other hand, 39.8% of the civil servants under study were

responded as there was no interview guide when they were employed. When the respondents asked the degree to what extent the conducted interview was relevant to the job description, 11.1% responded as very high, 20.3% as highly relevant and 17.6% of them also answered as it was moderate. However, 45.1% of the civil servants under study were reacted the relevancy of the interview guide and the job description was low and 5.9% of them were also replied as it was very low related.

Likewise, the civil servants were consulted whether they set for entrance exam when they recruited, selected and promoted in relation to the job description required or not and 33.1% of the respondents replied yes there was an entrance exam which related to the job description. 42.5% of them were also answered yes there was but not related to the job description. However, 24.4% of the civil servants were reacted as there was no entrance exam when they were employed. The civil servants were asked to share their observation concerning the degree to what extent the conducted entrance exam was relevant to the job description, 6.3% responded as very high, 12.5% as highly relevant and 51% of them also answered as it was moderate. However, 20.3% of the civil servants under study were reacted the relevancy of the interview guide and the job description was low and 9.9% of them were also replied as it was very low related.

#### 4.6. The Socialization Effort of Civil Service Organization

The Merit based human resource management is an agenda of how to make the recruitment, selection and promotion process more honest and realistic and how to maintain a dedicated and loyal workforce through organizational socialization. According to some scholars, socialization is a process by which a person learns the values, norms, and required behaviors which permit that individual to participate as a member of the organization. Race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and language are some of the barriers that affect the success of socialization in an organization.

With this in mind, respondents were asked about the level of socialization effort in their organization and 21.3% and 32.3% of the civil servant under study replied that their organization understand the vitality of socialization as critical to the survival of the organization, allow new members more and more access to the internal workings of the organization and impact uncertainty reduction, role ambiguity and turnover and practices in a very good and good way respectively. However, 18.9% of them answered it was conducted moderately, 19.2% of the respondents were responded such a practice was low and 8.3% as it was very low practiced in their institution.

#### 4.7. The Causes of Merit Distortion by Recruitment and Selection Committee

As has discussed above, recruitment and selection is the process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications. Thus, recruitment is the process of identifying and attracting potential candidates from within and outside an organization to begin evaluating them for future employment. Therefore, the recruitment and selection committee were established to conduct the recruitment and selection process under the given mandate and they are expected by any means not to violate the merit systems. However, since, recruitment and selection is affected by human behavior, as indicated in the table below, there were different factors that negatively affect the recruitment and selection by the committee in the study area.

**Table 4.5. The Causes of Merit Distortion by Recruitment and Selection Committee**

Item	Alternatives	No	%
Causes of merit distortion	- Lack of knowledge and experience	105	41.3
	- problems in forming the committee members	66	26
	- Corrupt practice	54	21.3
	- Interference of the politicians & HR managers	29	11.4
	Total	254	100

**Source: survey**

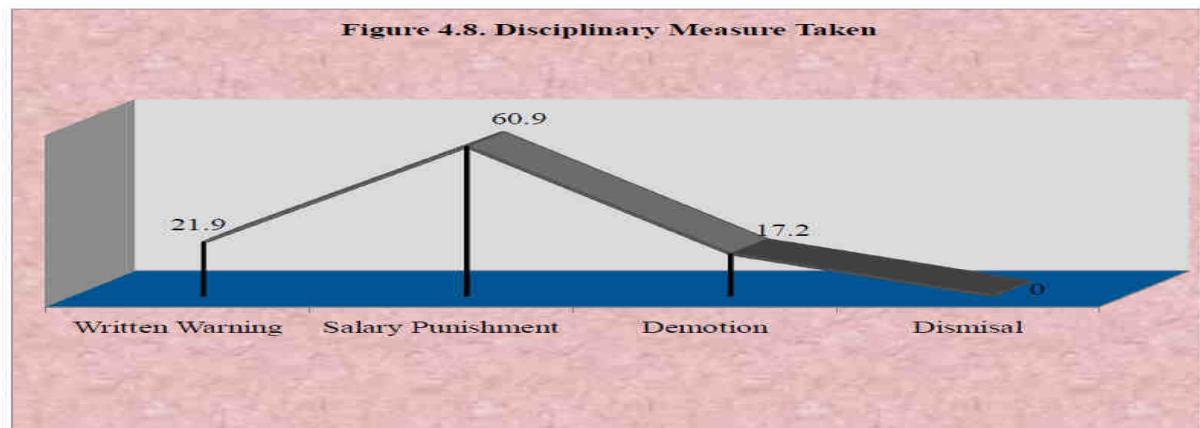
According to the Table 4.5 above, the effectively conducting job analysis and targeting right potential candidates ensures a good match between applicants and the jobs. In recruitment and selection practice, the construction of formalized selection frameworks and norms of acceptable discrimination may be seen as an attempt to enable managers to navigate between efficiency, control and social justice. However, unlike the recruitment and selection manual, the merit principles in the study area were distorted by multifaceted practices. The fact summarizes that, 41.3% of the respondents answered lack of knowledge and experience of the recruitment and selection committee was the major causes of merit distortion, 26% of them also replied irrelevancy of the committee members contributes some sort of distortion, 21.3% of the civil servants responded corrupt practice and 11.4% Interference of the politicians & HR managers were significantly affect the merit discipline during recruitment and selection by the recruitment and selection member committee in the city administration.



### The Accountability of the Recruitment and Selection Committee

Holding human resource management accountable to exercise the power given to them is of the major issues in contemporary civil service administration. At present the civil service reform in Ethiopia in general and Tigray regional state in particular has introduced an accountability mechanism and who is accountable for what is covered under the law of government institutions. With this regard, the civil servants under study were inquired whether there is an accountable body when trial to misuse merit principles or not and 32.3% and 16.1% of the respondents replied that yes the first and for most accountable organs are the human resource managers and office heads, because, they are practicing to recruit and select an individual civil servant. This is also out of the mandate they have, they violate the civil servants proclamation and the merit principle, especially in promotion, those who are loyal and member of the party (TPLF) dominated the civil positions without any competition simply by political appointment. The politically appointed officials used this simply because they are in power. On the other hand, 51.6% of the respondent answered that, the recruitment and selection committee members are accountable for their corrupt practices.

The civil servants were asked a question, is there any measure taken when misused of merit principles? 28% of the respondent said yes, 38.6% of them replied yes to some extent and 33.4% of the responded as no. Under the recruitment and selection manual, there are a clearly stated rules and regulation how to administer the merit principles, when to apply them, what disciplinary measure to be taken for whom. Compromising these rules and regulations is in one way or the other distorting the civil servants proclamation in particular and the human resource management principles at large. Therefore, civil servants were appealed to demonstrate their observation about the measure taken when there exist merit misuse in their organization and they replied as follow.

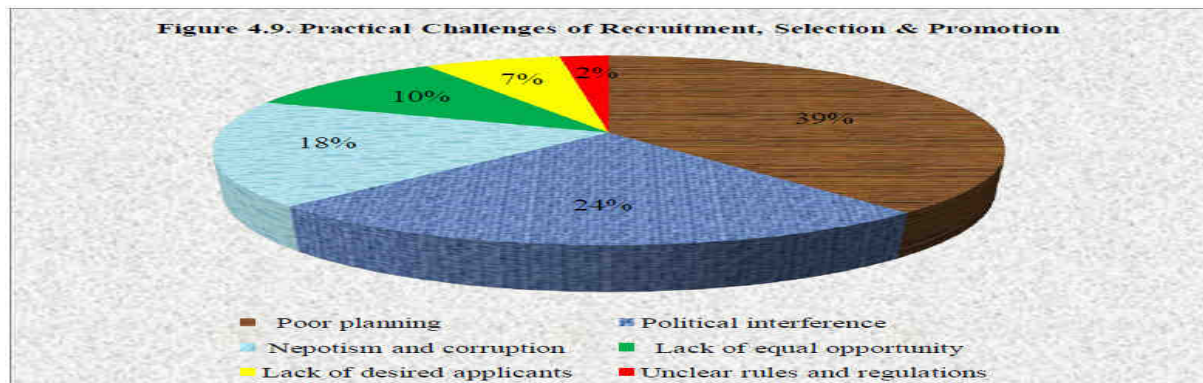


**Source: survey**

The data in the above figure 4.8 shows that, though the merit based human resource management is objectively initiated to attract a professional and impartial civil servant that will be essential to implement government policy as effective as possible; however, the respondents replied that as there were corrupt practice and unnecessary political interference during recruitment, selection and promotion. Accordingly, when the civil servants asked about the disciplinary measure taken against the misuse of merit principles, 60.9% of them answered salary punishment, 21.9% of the civil servant also responded as no punishment rather than written warning and 17.2% of them reacted as demotion but not dismissal. On the other hand, during the interview held with civil servants, respondents were replied that there was lack of confidence to take serious penalty, tolerance among each other that's why you don't see dismissal rather than warning, transfer, demotion and sometimes salary punishment. These things created for someone to wonder on violating merit principles.

### 4.8. The Practical challenges of Merit Based Human Resource Management

Merit based human resource management has an important role to play in ensuring civil servants performance and positive organizational outcomes. However, as in many literatures, it is often claimed that recruitment and selection of workers occurs not just simply to replace departing employees or add to a workforce but rather aims to put in place workers who can perform at a high level and demonstrate commitment. Respondents were requested for the practical challenges of merit based human resource management in the study area. The pie-chart bellow summarizes what the respondents said about the merit practice and the challenges faced.



Source: survey

According to figure 4.9 above, though merit based human resource management is a crucial end over in any organization, to be either part of the problem or part of the solution, however, the proper management of human resource in the study area was highly challenged by poor planning and unnecessary political interference. Accordingly, 39% and 24% of the civil servant under study replied that, the practical challenges of recruitment, selection and promotion in their city administration was poor planning and political interference respectively. Likewise, 18% of the respondents were answered the most critical challenge in implementing the merit based recruitment, selection and promotion was nepotism and corrupt practice. 10%, 7% and 2% of them were also reacted lack of giving equal opportunity to civil servants during recruitment, selection and promotion, lack of desired applicants and the existence of unclear rules and regulations in the recruitment and selection manual were the practical challenges in the application of the merit based human resource management respectively. Besides, the interviewee added some sort of immoral practices like the presentation of forged document to compete with, lack of exam security and cheating, nepotism, lack of appropriate performance appraisal, poor documentation, poor application of work experience and poor civil service structure were mentioned as a critical problems of the study area.

#### 4.9. Assessment Results of Sector Officials and Process Owners

In Ethiopia, the national, regional and local (*Woredas* and *Zones*) governments are giving due attention to the merit based HRM. The HRM and the civil service ethics sub reform programs were intentionally established to ensure the merit principles and to promote professional ethics. Therefore, the human resource managers and office heads of the study area were requested to suggest their opinion about the implementation performance of the HRM sub reform. All these officials supported that, the reform has contributed in fiscal decentralization, create team spirit to implement government policies and strategies and the merit disciplines, downsized redundant activities and workforces, grievance handling system established, rules and regulation framed and the way accountability ensured is laid under the legal framework of code of conduct. However, during the interview held with the officials, they also raised the problems of turnover, lack of good governance in some sector offices (many complaints), lack of clarity on the merit manual, corrupt practice during recruitment, selection and promotion, lack of clear job description in some fields, poor planning, poor recordkeeping, poor structures and salary of the civil servants, problem in COC manual and many failure of examinee were of the fundamentals of HRM in the area. Besides, the respondents added that, thought, so many remedial actions have been taken, the problems of manual revision by respected bodies are not yet solved and the practice to implement the codes of conduct is also one of the issues that need future attention.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1. Introduction

This part of the thesis contains the conclusions drawn from the detail analysis and discussions in relation to the merit based recruitment, selection and promotion as well as professional ethics in the study. In doing so, the researcher's recommendations and suggestions are also forwarded for what government officials in general and the human resource managers in particular should have to do in the future so as to come up with remedial action to solve the HRM problems.

### 5.2. Conclusions

In Tigray national regional state, *Woredas* are constitutionally empowered to administer their locality under a clearly separated power of the three branches of government. The power and function of the *Woredas* is affirmed in the regional constitution and deeper in the proclamation No 99/2006. Therefore, the legal framework empowers local governments and enables the civil servants to participate in all government agenda and in HRM

practices. Under this Legal framework, the revised Civil Servants Proclamation No 189/2010 in Tigray allows the *Woredas* to have the right to recruit, select, promote and dismiss among others to implement government policies. As part of the administrative decentralization, the Ethiopian CSR allows the civil service autonomy and the practice to have a merit based HRM is supported by the civil servants proclamations at federal and regional levels.

As has discussed above, merit-based recruitment, selection and promotion is described as the set of activities and processes used to obtain a sufficient number of qualified employees. The Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No 515/2007 asserts that a vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets the qualification required for the position and scores higher than other candidates. Likewise, the Tigray Civil Servants Proclamation No 189/2010 confirms that, the merit based recruitment, selection and promotion in the civil service should be from qualified individuals and appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society based on merit principles to attract a competent and effective professional after an open competition. Therefore, based on the analysis, the key findings are summarized and concluded as follow:

Merit based HRM has a strong potential for civil service institutions to motivate and to have a relatively equal distribution of male and female. To this regard, the study area ensured this practice as 55.1% and 44.9% of the civil servant respondents were male and female respectively.

The rationale behind educated and professional civil servant is that, civil servants have the highest professional quality and behaviors that put the public interest first. However, in professionalizing the civil service, the city administration was not successful because the educational background of the civil servants on average 44.9% of them was diploma holder and below that.

On the principal application of the merit based selection criteria, 50% of the respondents disagree and 13.8% of them strongly disagree. Besides, above 50% of the civil servants were claimed and responded their disagreement on the impartiality of the merit based selection. This indicates, in the city administration there was a merit distortion and lack of neutrality to attract qualified, experienced, competent and effective civil servant.

In the recruitment and selection manual, there are different methods of employee selection criteria. However, 42.8%, 10.3%, 11.6%, 9.5% of the respondents replied as the method used as a merit based selection criteria in the study area was employment test, medical examination, interview and reference respectively. Despite the fact that, there are different methods of merit based selection criteria, however, the application of all those merit based selection criteria were not used at the same time in the study area.

In the study area, in addition to the inappropriate employee selection, there were also distortion of merit based recruitment principles and criteria, and lack of planned recruitment. Because, above 57% of the respondents were opposed the scientific application and the practice of merit principles during recruitment. Besides, more than 62% of the respondents were replayed their disagreement on the planed recruitment. On the other hand, respondents were consulted their observation on the proper application of the merit based recruitment criteria in their city administration and 96% of them replied, the paradox to implement what is set in the legal framework as recruitment criteria and the trial of political appointment in civil positions.

Though promotion is recognition for employees who make a significant and effective contribution, however the finding shows that, in the study area such practice was not implemented by merit principles as above 57% of the respondents disagree on the proper application of the merit based promotion in their institutions. The civil servant selected for promotion should be of the most meritorious one who is able and ready to perform duties at a higher rank based on his/her job performance. However, in the study area priority was given for experience than performance.

In the study area, the human resource managers and the office heads were practiced beyond their mandate in recruitment and selection as 28% and 23% of the respondents were reacted the recruitment and selection in their organization were practiced by the office heads and human resource managers respectively. Such a practice is out of the merit discipline and it is the violation of rules and regulations under the civil servants proclamation. Especially in promotion, they were made the loyal and member of the party to dominate the civil positions without any competition simply by political appointment. This shows that as there was lack of accountability in the civil service institutions.

In recruitment and selection, the construction of formalized selection frameworks and norms of acceptable discrimination may be seen as an attempt to enable managers to navigate between efficiency, control and social justice. However, unlike the recruitment and selection manual, the merit principles during recruitment and selection by the recruitment and selection member committee in the study area were distorted by lack of knowledge and experience of the recruitment and selection committee, the formation of irrelevant recruitment and selection committee members, corrupt practice, interference of the politicians & HR managers.

Though merit based HRM is a crucial end over in any organization, however, the analysis indicates that, the proper management of human resource in the study area was highly challenged by poor planning, unnecessary political interference, nepotism and corrupt practice, lack of giving equal opportunity to all civil servants during recruitment, selection and promotion and the existence of unclear rules and regulation in the

recruitment and selection manual.

Despite the fact that the HRM sub reform was in place, it was poorly implemented in the study area because of the fact that there were the problems of turnover, lack of good governance in some sector offices (many complaints), lack of clear job description, poor recordkeeping, poor salary of the civil servants, problem in COC manual and many failure of examinee.

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